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ABSTRACT

Analysis of the deep structure of certain Tagalog sentences reveals buried agents. In Tagalog, verbs are inflected for the case role of the subject Noun Phrase (NP). However, Tagalog contains many sentences which, on the surface, do not appear to adhere to this rule, because they are missing the agent. Among sentences which deviate from the rule are those with locative subjects ("Linindol any Manila," Manila was earthquaked) and those with attack predicates, ("Simipon any doktor," The doctor was attacked by cold). The absence of the agent in the surface structure is due to its re-lexicalization in the verb base. This supports Postals' notion that in Philippine linguistics there are two subjects, the initial (underlying) and the cyclic. (PMJ)

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ON RESURRECTING BURIED AGENTS IN CERTAIN TAGALOG VERBS

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Tagolog verbs are inflected for the case role of the subject NP.[1] For example, if the subject is agent, the verb takes the infix -um-, thus:

(1) Tumugtog ang gitarista ng kundiman.
um+play SU-guitarist OBJ-love song

'The guitarist played a/the love song.'

A rule in Tagalog sentence formation is that if the verb is inflected for a particular case role, an NP exhibiting that role must be present and must serve as subject. The one apparent exception to this rule is the suó class of phenomenal sentences that express atmospheric conditions (cf. Schachter and Otanes 1972, 546), for example:

(2) Lumindol
?umulan
Bumagyo
Bumaha
Kumidlat
Kumulog
Humangin
Dumilim
Lumiwanag
sa Maynila

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The verbs have bases which translate in English respectively as follows: 'earthquake', 'rain', 'storm', 'flood', 'lightning', 'thunder', 'wind', 'darkness', 'light'. The observation embodied in the second sentence is expressed in English in the sentence 'It rained in Manila'.

The verbs in (2) are inflected for the agent NP as subject. However, the only nominal argument in (2) is the locative sa Maynila 'in Manila'. The anomaly here is twofold: First, these sentences have no subject NP, and second, while the verbs are inflected for agent, there is no agent nominal. (These sentences are not equivalent to English agentless passives; more on this shortly.)

The lack of agent is independent of the lack of subject, as evidenced by the fact that the examples in (3) have subject, the locative Maynila, but there apparently is no agent. The respective sentences in (2) and (3) are synonymous.

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(3) { Linindol / ?inulan / binagyo / binaha? / kinidlat / kinulog / hinangin / dinilim / liniwanag } ang Maynila

The -in- infix indicates that the subject is nonagent. These sentences may be glossed roughly as '*Manila was earthquaked', '*Manila was rained', etc.

The phenomenon of missing agent occurs in another class of sentences, whose predicates I will call the 'attack' predicates (these predicates express the idea of some disease afflicting the patient, or of some insects or pest infesting the patient, or of unknown spirits (e.g. ghost) or inevitable conditions (e.g. sleep) taking over the patient; a partial list is presented below). The predicate in (4) is an example.

(4) Sinipon ang doktor.
in+cold SU-doctor

Here, the verb base is sipon 'cold' (the disease), and the infix -in- signifies that the patient doktor is subject. An English translation of (4) that better captures its spirit is 'The doctor was attacked by cold', rather than the active 'The doctor caught cold'. Now contrast (4) with (5), which more closely approximates the English agentless passive.

(5) Binaril ang doktor.
in+shoot SU-doctor

'The doctor was shot.'

Sentences (4) and (5) are similar on surface. The lone nominal in both sentences is subject, and the verbs are inflected to show that the subject is patient. The sentences differ in one important respect: While speakers agree that (5) is a truncated transitive, with the agent deleted or left unidentified, they would not consider (4) as a truncated transitive in the manner of (5), that is, they do not feel the lack of an agent in (4).

A not uncommon response to (5) is an inquiry as to the identity of the agent. In (4), on the other hand, it makes no sense to inquire about the identity of the agent. Furthermore, (5) can be modified by including an agent nominal, as in (6) below, but a modification of (4) along this line is not possible, as indicated in (7).

(6) Binaril ng tao ang doktor.
in+shoot AGT-man SU-doktor
'The doctor was shot by the man.'

(7) *Sinipon {ng tao / ng panahon} ang doktor.
in+cold {AGT-man / AGT-weather} SU-doctor

In this squib, I will suggest that (2/3) and (4) are only apparently agentless, and that there is an agent in the underlying structures of these sentences. Thus, these sentences have parallel underlying structures with transitive constructions like (5), but that (5) gets rid of the agent through deletion, whereas (2/3) and (4), it will be suggested, re-lexicalize the agent as the verb base through lexical incorporation.

These facts relate to a recent suggestion by Postal, discussed in Schachter (1977), to analyze transitive sentences in Philippine languages to have two subjects, initial (underlying) and cyclic. In this proposal, the agent serves as initial subject and the topic (the ang-nominal) as cyclic subject. This suggestion was made in reply to Schachter's observation that in Philippine languages, there is no single constituent type that serves as subject, but that subjecthood is a set of properties shared by two constituent types, the agent and the topic. The significance of this observation, as pointed out by Schachter, is that it just may invalidate the claim of universality for subject, which is a basic assumption in Relational Grammar. Postal's analysis saves the notion of subject as a category in Philippine languages, since the set of subject properties will then be exhibited by one and the same subject category at different levels of analysis.

At first glance, it would appear that these agentless and subjectless sentences are counterexamples to the two-subject analysis. The reasoning is that if no agent is felt to be missing, then there is no agent in underlying structure; hence, no agent can serve as initial subject. Now, the surface structures of the agentless sentences (3) show that a nonagent nominal is cyclic subject (i.e. the topic ang Maynila). Therefore, at some point in the derivation, an advancement rule that put the initial subject in chômage must have applied. But then it doesn't make sense to say that such an advancement rule has applied since there is no agent (i.e. initial subject) in the first place, and there is no subject chômeur on surface. The sentences in (2) are thus even more 'anomalous' in that not only are they agentless but they are also subjectless.

I will suggest that these sentences, instead of serving as counterexamples to Postal's two-subject analysis, in fact support it.

The fact that native speakers feel that the transitive construction (4) does not lack an agent, and the fact that it is not possible to modify (4) to include an overt agent, may be considered to be an indication that the sentence contains an agent nominal. The agent is not missed because it is there, and no agent nominal can be added **because**, as a matter of general principle, there cannot be two uncoordinated noun phrases with the same function in a **simplex** sentence.

I suggest that the verb base of this type of construction is the agent nominal in underlying structure, and becomes the verb base only through lexical incorporation. It will be noticed that these bases are in fact noun bases. Listed below and grouped into semantic subclasses are some of the bases that belong to this class. The first group refers to insects or small animals, the second group to diseases of mind and body, and the third group to phases of the day. The fourth group is a grab bag of words.

I		II	
kuto	'louse'	taghiyawat	'pimple'
lamok	'mosquito'	dugo	'blood'
langgam	'ant'	pawis	'sweat'
anay	'termite'	balakubak	'dandruff'
ipis	'cockroach'	galis	'eczema'
hanip	'flea'	pantal	'skin rash'
uod	'worm'	galos	'skin rash'
bulate	'worm'	muta?	'sore eye'
surot	'bed bug'	sipon	'cold'
linta?	'leach'	ubo	'cough'
ahas	'snake'	sinok	'hiccup'
amag	'mold'	hika?	'asthma'
		pekas	'skin patch'
III		kulugo	'wart'
		lagnat	'fever'
umaga	'morning'	alimpungat	'bad dream'
tanghali?	'afternoon'	bangungot	'bad dream'
hapon	'late afternoon'	libat	'bad dream'
hating-gabi	'midnight'	alibadbad	'bad feeling'
madaling-araw	'dawn'	balunguyngoy	'nose bleed'

IV

libag	'body dirt'	lumot	'moss'
multo	'ghost'	alimuom	'ground steam'
lamig	'cold'	init	'warm'
kilabot	'goosepimple'	antok	'sleep'
himatay	'pass out'	gisaw	'ease up'
sawa	'surfeit'	gana	'appetite'
sipag	'industriousness'	tamad	'laziness'

All of these bases take the -in- infix, and some take the -an suffix as well, e.g. pinawisan, ginisawan, etc. Bases with initial l have the alternative metathesized form, thus: linagnat/nilagnat, etc.

Sentences formed on these bases have corresponding paraphrases in which the verb is inatake (from the base atake, which is a nativization of Spanish ataque 'attack'), and the agent nominal is a base from this class. For example, synonymous with (8) is (9).

(8) ?inubo ang doktor.
in+cough SU-doctor

(9) inatake ng ubo ang doktor.
in+attack AGT-cough SU-doctor

'*The doctor was attacked by cough.'

It is noteworthy that there is no indigenous word for the verb attack in Tagalog (lusob comes close). I postulate an abstract verb ATTACK/AFFLICT in the underlying structure of these sentences. Thus the underlying structure of (8) would appear as follows:

(10) ATTACK SU-ubo OBJ-doktor

where the subject ubo 'cough' is agent. To derive (8) from (10), the object doktor advances to subject, giving rise to the nonagent infix -in- in the verb, and lexical incorporation makes the agent nominal the verb base.

There is a bit of independent support for lexical incorporation of this sort. These 'attack/afflict' sentences have possessive counterparts. The possessive counterpart of (8) is as follows:

(11) Nagkaruon ng ubo ang doktor.
have-there PSD-cough PSR-doctor

'The doctor happened to have cough.'

Synonymous with (11) is the following:

(12) Nagkaubo ang doktor.
have-cough SU-doctor

Obviously, (11) and (12) should have the same underlying representation. This underlying representation can be made closer tc either surface (11) or surface (12). If it is made closer to (11), the process of lexical incorporation that works for (2/3) and (4) can be adverted to in deriving (12), whereas if the underlying structure is made closer to (12), deriving (11) necessitates an altogether new process, which is the converse of lexical incorporation. On this basis, we say that the underlying representation is closer to (11), and that in (12) the possessed NP ubo 'cough', which is what we are postulating here as the underlying agent, has been lexically incorporated into the verb, replacing the verb base ruon 'there'. Lexical incorporation of the sort required for (2/3) and (4) is thus shown to be independently necessary.

We now have a way of accounting for the apparent agentlessness of 'attack' sentences. This solution also works for the agentless phenomenal sentences (3), as well as for the synonymous agentless and subjectless phenomenal sentences (2). To elaborate, first we reproduce below a pair of these synonymous phenomenal sentences.

(13) a. lumindol sa Maynila.
um+earthquake LOC-Manila

'*It earthquaked in Manila.'

b. linindol ang Maynila.
in+earthquaked SU-Manila

'*Manila was earthquaked.'

Two things have to be accounted for: the synonymy of (13a) and (13b), and their surface structure dissimilarity. The synonymy can be taken care of by postulating the same underlying structure for both sentences, as follows:

(14) ATTACK SU(AGT)-lindol LOC-Maynila

The syntactic dissimilarity can be accounted for in the following manner. In deriving (13a) from (14), only lexical incorporation applies. The locative nominal Maynila does not advance to subject position. Because no advancement rule has applied, the agent lindol 'earthquake' is still subject at the time of verb morphology, hence, the verb has the infix -um-, indicating that the subject is agent. Since Maynila has not advanced, it picks up the locative marker sa. On the other hand, in the derivation of (13b), Maynila advances to subject, picking up the subject marker ang, and the agent nominal lindol is incorporated into the verb. At the time of verb morphology, the agent nominal is subject chômeur, and thus it does not control verb morphology, hence, the nonagent inflection -in- in the verb.

All this is possible only if we assume that the underlying structure of these sentences contains an agent nominal and that, at a certain stage of the derivation, this agent is subject -- to account for the verb morphology in (13a), and at another stage of the derivation this agent is nonsubject (i.e. subject chômeur) — to account for the nonagent-as-subject inflection of the verb in (13b).

Thus the apparent exceptionality of Tagalog subjectless and agentless phenomenal sentences, of agentless phenomenal sentences, and of agentless 'attack'-sentences vanishes within the framework of Postal's two-subject analysis for Philippine languages.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Following relational grammarians who have written on this aspect of Tagalog grammar, I refer to this category as subject. It should, however, be noted that the identification of the subject in Philippine languages is problematic, in the light of Schachter's (1977) suggestion that subjecthood in Philippine languages is not a category but a set of properties shared by two constituent types, the agent and the topic.

It should also be pointed out that English passive glosses of Tagalog sentences whose subject is nonagent, used throughout this squib, are only rough approximations of the syntax and semantics of the Tagalog sentences.

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